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ABSTRACT

Because title changes of reprints cause specific problems for libraries, resulting in waste of time and money, 54 reprint publishers were polled about their policies regarding reprint title changes. The conclusions reached were: (1) The reprint publishing industry needs to reevaluate its practices, giving more consideration to the needs of academic libraries; (2) Libraries should refuse to patronize uncooperative publishers; and (3) Libraries should return inadvertent duplications without delay. (Author/NR)

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TITLE CHANGES, REPRINT PUBLISHERS, AND LIBRARIES

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A B S T R A C T

Because title changes of reprints cause specific problems for libraries, resulting in waste of time and money, fifty-four reprint publishers were polled about their policies regarding reprint title changes.

Academic libraries are the major market for scholarly reprint publishing, and the reprint publishing industry needs to reevaluate its practices and make the relationship with academic libraries a more symbiotic one.

Until many reprint publishers' practices with regard to title changes are amended, libraries have two recourses to action: refusing to patronize those publishers who are the offenders and returning inadvertent duplications without delay.

Academic and research libraries are the major market for scholarly reprints. A reprint with an unannounced title change is a bibliographic anomaly and an annoying problem for librarians. If libraries took the advice of two authorities cited later to boycott or reject any such bibliographic malpractice, would the reprint publishers' attention then be directed to a library problem that eventually rebounds to the reprinters' economic and public-relations disadvantage as well?

The recurring problem of unannounced changes in reprint titles became especially acute recently as this searcher was doing the preliminary bibliographic searching in the library's card catalog before ordering some reprint titles. It seemed that an unusual number of titles being searched were very nearly the same as those the library owned by the same authors. Because the similarity of titles was so great, it was necessary to search further to determine if, in fact, the authors had written two books with like titles on the same subject, or, as suspected, there was only one book under two separate titles.

A more complete search resulted in the correct Library of Congress or National Union Catalog entry for the new titles, and it was discovered in the notes that these books had undergone title changes in the reprint process. Ordering the reprint titles without knowledge of the changes in title would have resulted in several hundred dollars' worth of duplicates for the library.

Library Difficulties

Reprints with title changes cause difficulties at at least three points in the library: in the acquisitions and cataloging departments and for the users of the library.

In the acquisitions department most titles are searched through the library's holdings before ordering to verify the correct form of entry, to establish precataloging, to relate the title being searched to the library collection, and to eliminate duplicate titles. A book with a title change presents a special difficulty for the bibliographic searcher. In discussing some of the difficulties of a public library that was acquiring reprints on a standing order plan, Carol A. Nemeyer, Senior Associate of the Association of American Publishers, said, "Additional paraprofessional staff was employed just to do the preliminary bibliographic search in the library's catalogs. More professional staff time was needed to help the searchers, for reprints are difficult to check bibliographically due to title changes and new matter added."[1]

If a Library of Congress catalog card is found for the title in question, the title change may be listed, and the bibliographic searcher can check both titles in the library's card catalog. If the searcher does not find a Library of Congress proof sheet

or National Union Catalog listing and the publisher's catalog, blurb or other reference makes no mention of a title change, the searcher risks ordering an unwanted duplicate for the library. Even if the publisher's promotional material does include the title change information, extra searching time is needed to check out both titles. Publishers' catalogs are not considered bibliographic verification by libraries and are therefore not included in the search process. Checking publishers' catalogs is an added time-consuming step, necessary when searching reprints where title changes are suspected.

In the cataloging department a duplicate caused by a title change may not be discovered until the book has been cataloged and only then if mention of the original is made somewhere in the book. If the duplicate is to be added to the collection, the cataloger will be responsible for making added entries or cross references from one title to the other in the card catalog.

These notes are to aid the library user who may approach the card catalog with only one title, either the original or the changed title. If the library user has only the original title and the library has the reprint under the changed title with no reference to the original, the user will assume the library does not have the book he or she wants. The situation might be reversed if the library owns a copy of the original and the searcher eliminates the reprint with a title change as a duplicate before ordering. The user who approaches the card catalog with the reprint title only will not be aware of the original title because the cataloger will have made no cross reference in the card catalog for a book not in the collection. The user will again assume the library does not have the book he wants.

Literature and Publisher Survey

Aware that title changes are a bibliographic nuisance for the library from the standpoint of time and money spent, it seemed pertinent to learn what libraries and librarians had to say on the subject. A check of the journal literature showed that the problem of title changes or reprints has had little attention. Books on publishing usually treat only the theory of assigning a title to a new publication.

After a review of the library literature, the fifty-four hardcover reprint publishers listed in the 1974-75 edition of Literary Market Place were surveyed and asked the following questions:

1: Do you change reprint titles from the original?

2: If so, why do you change reprint titles?

3: Does your promotional material give both the original and the new titles?

Of the fifty-four publishers polled, forty-four (81%) responded.

In answer to question number one, twenty-five publishers said they never change reprint titles from the original, five said they do change reprint titles from the original, and thirteen answered that they rarely or occasionally change reprint titles

(One publisher wrote to say his company was no longer in operation.) Thus, eighteen of the forty-four publishers who responded (41%) admitted to changing the titles of reprints.

Seven of those surveyed who responded "No" to question number one (Do you change the titles of reprints?) indicated they considered changing the titles of reprints a bad practice. One publisher wrote that changing titles of reprints was dishonest and would imply a new book. Another said changing titles of reprints was purposely misleading and realized the confusion it caused. One response was even more emphatic: the publisher called the practice of changing reprint titles "stupid and unprofessional."

Some of the reprint publishers that change titles of reprints also answered questions two and three. Of the reasons given for changing titles of reprints, three publishers said they changed titles to increase sales, two said titles were changed to make imports more descriptive for an American market, and the rest said that they thought the original title was misleading and the title was changed to make it more descriptive of the contents of the book. In answer to question number three, five publishers said they list both the original and the changed title in their promotional literature.

Specific Title Changes

Nine publishers were then queried about specific examples of title changes found in their publications. Their responses concerning the specific titles in question support the general trend in the survey; they changed the titles of these reprints

1: as a result of a marketing or sales decision in an effort to appeal to a specific audience; for example, a British import with a title changed to appeal to an American audience

2: because there was a similar title still in print

3: to make the title more descriptive of the contents of the book.

These publishers seemed to subscribe to some of the theories for selecting titles as explained by Sir Stanley Unwin, Eleanor Harman, Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., and Carol A. Nemeyer.

Sir Stanley said about descriptive titles: "The titles of books often present one of the most difficult problems a publisher has to face. In some cases, success or failure may depend upon the right choice. It is desirable both that the title should be short and that it should accurately describe the book, two conditions that frequently seem incompatible. The difficulty can sometimes be solved by the addition of a sub-title, which, if necessary, can be longer and convey a more exact idea of the contents."[2]

One publisher seemed to be in accord with Sir Stanley's reasoning for changing the subtitle. He changed the subtitle of a book that was a British import, because he thought the new subtitle would be more descriptive in the American market.[3]

Like Sir Stanley, Eleanor Harman, Associate Director of the University of

Toronto Press, stated a case for descriptive titles. She said "The ideal title, besides being short and memorable, is precisely descriptive of the book...."[4] Likewise, one major reprint publisher replied that his intent is to give the book buyer a good idea of the contents of a book, and he may choose a title that he feels is most accurate and most descriptive of the contents.[5] [6] If he changes the title of a book when he reprints it, the publisher stated that his practice is to indicate on the copyright page of the reprint the title of the original work, the name of the original publisher and the year of publication.

Miss Harman mentioned another theory for choosing a title. She said "There is no copyright on titles, and the chief protection an author has against a title being borrowed by another author is the good judgment of publishers. Similarity of titles is not an important consideration in naming textbooks.... In books of general interest, especially if published in the same season, similarity of titles is undesirable."[7]

Similarity of titles was, indeed, the reason one publisher quoted for changing a title. He responded that the original title of the book, also a British import, was too similar to the title of another book still in print.[8] The publisher gave the assurance that not all titles of imports are changed, but in this particular instance he felt it would be an advantage from a marketing view to change the title.

The marketing advantage in title changes is supported by this statement from Herbert S. Bailey, Jr.: "For many other books, especially books appealing to the general public, the sales may be more sensitive to the marketing effort...."[9] One publisher apparently concurred with Bailey's statement, for he answered question number two by saying that title changes may be a question of audience. The specific book inquired about was originally intended for the general reading public, but when the book was reissued for use in college courses, the title was changed.[10]

Mrs. Nemeyer agrees that a title change may be a marketing decision and adds that an author may also be responsible for a change in title. "A change in the title of a book generally is the result of the author's request or the opinion of the editorial or marketing people who think the book might have more appeal under one or another title."[11]

Similarly, one publisher responded that the title change he made was an effort to appeal to a specific audience. The publisher indicated that he changed the title of one book because it was an abridgment of the original.[12] The abridgment was intended for a juvenile audience and was specifically aimed at arresting the attention of the less motivated student.

It may be interesting to note here that a major reprint publisher that professes to be concerned about the current state of the reprint industry,[13] is

responsible for one of the confusing title changes and answered neither the first letter nor the follow-up inquiring about that specific title change.[14] In answer to question number one of the survey, this publisher claimed he rarely changes the titles of reprints. Nevertheless, a recent issue of the firm's catalog lists thirty-eight title changes.

The publisher should perhaps show more evidence of his concern for libraries. In 1972 libraries spent 328 million dollars on books, 11% of the total number of dollars spent on books that year.[15] If the reprint market (except for mass-marketed paperbacks) is largely aimed at research and acsdemic libraries that are attempting to complete their collections in many fields, it follows that scholarly reprint publishers should be more attentive to the needs and problems of these libraries and more aware of library bibliographic practices.

Library-Publisher Cooperation

Although the reasons for changing titles seem logical from a publisher's view, reprint publishers and librarians alike are cognizant of the lack of bibliographic controls for reprints and have agreed on the need for greater cooperation among themselves.[16]

Mrs. Nemeyer has reiterated this concern for the cooperation of publishers and libraries. "It is generally believed...that libraries have a strong determinative effect upon the reprint industry. This assumption is supported firmly by the way publishers defined their reprint markets in the present survey. Seventy-eight of 116 publishers ranked college and university libraries as primary markets for reprints. This is 61% of the 116 publishers who responded to Mrs. Nemeyer survey, 50% more than the general library market for total publishing. If for none other than pragmatic reasons, therefore, publishers need to understand the problems librarians have as buyers of reprints...and as the professional group probably most concerned with the content and quality of reprints."[17]

If reprint publishers have such a great opportunity to sell reprints to academic libraries, why are more of them not fully aware of the need for stricter adherence to academic bibliographic standards? In addition to the Library of Congress, which helps to identify title changes by printing such information on the Library of Congress catalog cards, and catalogers, who identify title changes for the library user by making cross references to the original title in the card catalog of the library, what can publishers do to minimize the difficulties that title changes cause librarians and library users?

Although of no real help to the library user who usually has only one of the alternate titles, one possibility would be for the publisher always to include all the pertinent information (title of the original work, name of the original

publisher, year of publication and place in original series, if any) in his catalogs or other advertising. "Publishers question why librarians want or need original place and date of publication information printed in the book and in promotional literature; librarians ask how any thoughtful publisher could omit such essential bibliographic information,"[18] Mrs. Nemeyer has written. If the most effective means of reaching the academic market is through the use of catalogs and announcements,[19] including this information in advertising would at least make it available to the searcher during the ordering procedure and would eliminate ordering and subsequent return to the publisher of an excessive number of unwanted duplicates.

A second possibility was suggested by a publisher who claimed that in the future, should he change any part of a title, he would print the information on the verso of the title page, a practice already in use by one publisher. This information would again not be available to library users and neither would it be of use to bibliographic searchers, but it would give catalogers information for the cross references they add to the card catalog.

Recourse for Libraries

What can libraries do to solve the problem of title changes until all reprint publishers make a concerted effort to be more explicit in their advertising and to follow correct bibliographic standards?

There are at least two possibilities available to libraries.

Daniel Melcher has written "Must reprints be as expensive as they are? What can be done to discourage premature publication announcements, leading to premature commitment of funds? What can be done to discourage reprinters who change titles (underlining added), omit references to series, create series out of unrelated volumes, and have unacceptedly low standards of workmanship or scholarship? Isn't there any way to avoid the waste inherent in having two or more reprinters reviving the same title at the same time?

"Frankly, I can see no way to dampen the enthusiasm of the less responsible reprinters except to stop buying their wares."[20]

Bernard M. Rosenthal, antiquarian bookseller and author of an article on the antiquarian reprint trade,[21] has commented concerning the policies of reprinters regarding title changes. "All I can say is that that's just one more sin to be added to the list.... I don't know whether certain reprint firms change title as a matter of policy and, if so, just what the policy is.

"But I think that librarians should definitely follow a policy, and a very simple one: whenever you find that you're buying a book you already have because this kind of deception was practiced, return it to the publisher. And urge all your colleagues to do likewise!"[22]

Presumably, a library practice of shipping back all such inadvertent duplicates would have a high nuisance value with the publishers, and in this day of higher book costs and reduced book budgets it becomes even more neccesary for libraries to identify those publishers who change reprint titles frequently and refuse to purchase their titles.

One hopes that publishers will take the initiative in supplying accurate and complete bibliographic information at least in their advertising so that these two drastic measures--refusing to patronize those publishers and summarily returning inadvertent duplications--will not be necessary.

FOOTNOTES

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3. Leonore Davidoff, The Best of Circles; Women and Society in Victorian England (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973).
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8. Sheila Scott, Barefoot in the Sky; an autobiography (New York: Macmillan, 1974,c1973).
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9. Herbert Smith Bailey, Jr., The Art and Science of Book Publishing (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 142.

10. John Arthur Garraty, A History of the World 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
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11. Carol A. Nemeyer, personal letter, 10 May 1974.

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15. John P. Dessauer, "Where the Book Buyers' Money Goes," Table: "1972 Channels of Domestic Book Distribution," Publishers Weekly, 204:42-3 (30 July 1973), as cited in Publishers Weekly, 205:58 (4 February 1974).

16. Connie R. Dunlap, "Reprinting: Problems, Directions, Challenges," Library Resources and Technical Services, 15:34-75 (Winter 1971).

17. Nemeyer, Scholarly Reprint Publishing, p. 110.

18. Ibid., p. 110-11.

19. Fred Rappoport, "The Changing Philosophy of Reprint Publishers," Library Resources and Technical Services, 15:52 (Winter 1971).

20. Daniel Melcher, Melcher on Acquisition (Chicago: American Library Association, 1971), p. 159.

21. Bernard M. Rosenthal, "The Antiquarian Reprint Trade," Antiquarian Bookman, 35:1667-8 (19 April 1965).

22. Bernard M. Rosenthal, personal letter, 20 April 1974.

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